

Is It Still 'Awkward'?



**"Awkward"**

**-or-**

**"So When *Should* We 'Shoot the Bastards'?"**

**by Mike Vanderboegh**

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**(More along the line of grim thinking inspired by government misconduct in the Olofson case.)**

***When the 23rd Regiment was finally back in Boston after the ordeal of April 19, adjutant Frederick Mackenzie wrote in his diary, "I believe the fact is, that General Gage was not only much deceived with respect to the quantity of military stores said to be collected at Concord, but had no conception the rebels would have opposed the King's troops in the manner they did." -- General John Galvin, The Minutemen, Pergamon-Brassey's, 1989, page 244.***

**Where to draw the line?**

***"America is at that awkward stage. It's too late to work within the system, but too early to shoot the bastards." - Claire Wolfe, 101 Things to Do 'Til the Revolution***

**Libertarian Wolfe made her famous observation above in the mid-nineties.**

**Now here we are more than ten years later, even more isolated and politically disenfranchised, and we must ask the question: how far do we have to go to get past "awkward?"**

**History never exactly repeats itself and thus is an imperfect guide. Studying history "we see through a glass, darkly." Still, there are patterns in history that deserve our close attention, so we may better understand how to act in the present and to enable us to better predict the future. Through history, we understand that no idea, bad or good, ever truly dies. We are also shown that people, being human, repeat the mistakes of their ancestors, over and over again. Indeed, there is no one blinder than a historical amnesiac.**

**So when we consider the question suggested by Claire Wolfe, that is, when are we past the awkward stage and into the day of "shooting the bastards," we must consult history for examples to guide us. I offer firstly a lesson in waiting too long from William Sheridan Allen's outstanding study, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town* (Franklin Watts/Grolier, 1984):**

***And yet, one has to ask the question, what happened to those who had sworn resistance? What happened to the Reichsbanner, which had repeatedly asserted, in the years before Hitler came to power, that when the expected Nazi coup came they would be able to defend the Republic? In Northeim, at least, the Republic was destroyed without a single blow struck in its defense. The Reichsbanner, with all its plans for instant mobilization, had its members struck down one by one, its leaders imprisoned, beaten, hounded from their jobs and their homes without any resistance from the organization as a whole. Perhaps the basic reason for this was that there was no Nazi coup d'etat. Instead there was a series of quasi-legal actions over a period of at least six months, no one of which by itself constituted a revolution, but the sum of which transformed Germany from a republic to a dictatorship. The problem was where to draw the line. But by the time that line could be clearly drawn, the revolution was a fait accompli, the potential organs of resistance had been individually smashed, and organized resistance was no longer possible. In short, the splendid organization was to no avail; in the actual course of events it was***

***every man for himself. (Allen, p. 191)***

**Even after reading Allen's work, I have often wondered why the German opposition just laid down without a fight. Back in the nineties, I was talking to Aaron Zelman of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, and one of us (I recall it was him, he thinks it was me) made this observation: *"If every Jewish and anti-Nazi family in Germany had possessed a Mauser rifle, 20 rounds of 7.92mm ball and the will to use it, Adolf Hitler would have been an obscure footnote to the history of the Weimar Republic."***

**True enough, whoever said it. But as Grant Hammond observed about Colonel John Boyd's seminal theories of warfare:**

***"There is another trinity in Boyd's strategic catechism as well. It is a concern for what he lumps together as moral-mental-physical aspects of opponents. Most definitions of war define them as contests in physical violence. Boyd sees them mainly as moral struggles won as much by mental as physical prowess. But he sees the complex—moral-mental-physical—as a single entity, a synthesis that can be broken down analytically but must be understood as a composite whole. It matches another Trinitarian composite, that of people first, ideas second and things third. This happens to be the opposite of the way most militaries approach problem solving by focusing on technology, platforms and weaponry first, ideas about their employment second and people—who are largely interchangeable and ultimately, are expendable—third. This way of thinking has little utility in Boyd's Way and in fact, may be the seed of many a defeat."* (Source: Grant T. Hammond, The Essential Boyd).**

**Many Americans, especially us small "r" republicans, take heart when we recall that the American citizenry possesses more small arms than most of the world's armies put together. And as Clausewitz observed, in military affairs quantity DOES have a quality all its own (just ask any Korean War veteran about his first experience with a Chinese human wave assault).**

**Still, as Napoleon insisted, *"The moral is to the physical as three is to one."* We cannot be protected by our possession of a hundred million rifles**

if we lack the will use them. Iraq was an armed society, yet the Saddam dictatorship had little trouble tyrannizing that country for decades. And it cannot be doubted that there are many American gunowners who would, at the first command of an American tyranny, turn in their weapons simply because they are "law-abiding" people who "don't want any trouble" -- simply because, in fact, they have forgotten what it is to be free. They have grown used to doing what the government tells them to do. And perhaps that was the problem with the Weimar republicans:

*The Northeimer Reichsbanner itself was ready to fight in 1933. All it needed was an order from Berlin. Had it been given, Northeimer's Reichsbanner members would have carried out the tested plan they had worked on so long -- to obtain and distribute weapons and to crush the Nazis. But (the local Reichsbanner) would not act on its own. The leaders felt that single acts would come to grief, would possibly compromise the chance when it finally did come, and would, in any event, be a betrayal of discipline. They felt that their only hope was in common action, all together, all over the Reich. Hadn't (their national leaders) said that only a counterattack should be made? So they waited and prayed for the order to come, but it never did. And while they waited the Nazis began tracking them down, one by one. (Allen, p. 191)*

The Germans, wholly indoctrinated in obeying orders, were incapable of acting without them. Because their would-be tyrants represented "the government" and cloaked their wolfish actions in "legal" sheepskin, because their own "leaders" could not or would not give the order, they all ended up in a concentration camp -- leaders and followers -- without ever having struck a blow. I am again reminded of Boyd's "moral-mental-physical" dynamic by this observation of Allen's:

*"This situation, where even heroism was denied the men of the democratic Left, came about in no small measure because of the failure of the Social Democrats to understand the nature of Nazism. Just as their basic premise in the years before Hitler came to power was the erroneous assumption that the Nazis were essentially Putschists who could not possibly attract a mass following, so their basic premise after Hitler came to power was the*

***equally erroneous assumption that his would be a government similar to the others of the Weimar period." (Ibid, p. 192)***

**Because of their inability to see the enemy for what he really was (and if ever there was an enemy who delighted in shouting his intentions to the rafters it was Hitler) they went straight from the "awkward stage" to the concentration camps without ever firing a shot.**

### **Thinking and Acting before Feeling**

**Now, contrast the behavior of the Germans to that of our Founding Fathers. This is best illustrated by reading Gordon S. Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776 - 1787*:**

***In the American Revolution, Wood wrote, "there was none of the legendary tyranny of history that had so often driven desperate people into rebellion. The Americans were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial shackles to throw off. In fact, the Americans knew they were probably freer and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and hierarchical restraints than any part of mankind in the eighteenth century. To its victims, the Tories, the Revolution was truly incomprehensible. Never in history, said Daniel Leonard, had there been so much rebellion with so 'little real cause.' . . . The objective social reality scarcely seemed capable of explaining a revolution . . .***

***As early as 1775 Edmund Burke had noted in the House of Commons that the colonists' intensive study of law and politics had made them acutely inquisitive and sensitive about their liberties. Where the people of other countries had invoked principles only after they had endured 'an actual grievance,' the Americans, said Burke, were anticipating their grievances and resorting to principles even before they actually suffered. 'They augur misgovernment at a distance and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze.' The crucial question in the colonists' minds, wrote John Dickerson in 1768, was 'not, what evil HAS ACTUALLY ATTENDED particular measures -- but what evil, in the nature of things, IS LIKELY TO ATTEND them.' Because 'nations, in general, are not apt to THINK until***

***they FEEL, . . .therefore nations in general have lost their liberty.' But not the Americans, as the Abbe Raynal observed. They were "an 'enlightened people' who knew their rights and the limits of power and who, unlike any people before them, aimed to think before they felt. "***

**(Source: Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787, UNC Press, 1969, pp. 3-5)**

**The Founders were people who believed in "preserving the spirit of resistance." To take Abbe Raynal's words to their conclusion, the Founders aimed to think AND act before they felt. Unlike the Germans, their "awkward stage" ended at Lexington green, and ultimately led to liberty.**

**In the light of recent events such as the Olofson case, it seems plain that our own "awkward stage" may be perilously close to drawing to an end. There are those who still insist that such unconstitutional outrages perpetrated under color of law deserve nothing more than verbal condemnation or further attempts at legal redress in a "justice" system rigged against us (as if these thugs pay attention to the law anyway). Used to inaction and afraid of even voicing the threat of justifiable self-defense, these timid souls, these "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots," would have us wait for true tyranny before acting.**

**This was not the way of the Founders. They understood that tyranny is best strangled in its unholy infancy, before it becomes a raging beast. They understood the threat, they prepared to meet it and, in the end, they defeated it. The Germans of the 1930s did not, and they were devoured.**

**I say we would do well to emulate the Founders rather than the Germans, to think and ACT before we feel, when it will be too late. This is important not only for those Americans who wish to remain free, but for those on the other side who unthinkingly seek to rob us of our freedoms and for those in the middle who (ignoring the Law of Unintended Consequences) sit idly by, content to watch the destruction of the American republic on television while thinking it has nothing to do with, and can have no effect upon, them.**

**If we small "r" republicans do nothing else, we should let the rogue elements of our own government know that in addition to outnumbering them, we still preserve the spirit of resistance, despite have been marginalized politically by the two major parties. Perhaps, if everyone understands that, the Redcoats (now wearing black raid gear) will not once again blunder and unknowingly march out from Boston into an unexpected but perfectly predictable butchery contest.**

**By our words, our preparations, our training and our actions we, the armed citizenry of the Republic of the United States of America, still have the opportunity to convince them of our unyielding determination to remain free. It may be our last best hope to preserve uninterrupted both our God-given liberties and the domestic peace we have come to love too much. While it is better to be "awkward" than to be dead, it is better still to die fighting than to be enslaved without a fight.**

**Just ask the Germans of the Weimar Republic.**

**So THINK and ACT before you FEEL. The Founders did.**

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